



**Fact Sheet: Naturalization in the U.S. Armed Forces**

The United States allows individuals who are not citizens to join the U.S. Armed Forces as enlisted members, a policy with a long-standing history. As a part of this tradition, the United States has adopted policies that allow enlisted members of the armed forces who are not citizens to naturalize more quickly.

**Background**

- [In 2013](#), the active duty military had more than 65,000 non-citizens including more than 30,000 lawful permanent residents. Non-citizens account for 4% of all new military recruits and roughly 12% of all living veterans are non-citizens or children of non-citizens.
- In addition to all other general requirements to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces, an individual who is not a citizen [must also have](#) a green card (form I-551), currently live in the United States, and speak, read, and write English fluently.
- The [Military Accessions Vital to National Interest \(MAVNI\) Program](#) allows asylees, refugees, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, and others who are physicians, nurses, and experts in specific languages the opportunity to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces. (This program remains [suspended](#).)

**Naturalization in the U.S. Armed Forces**

- [From FY2001 to FY2016](#), United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalized 117,927 noncitizen service members. USCIS has also naturalized 2,650 military spouses from [FY2008 to FY2015](#).
- The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) establishes different requirement for citizenship for non-citizen service members during [“peacetime”](#) or [“periods of hostilities”](#) (since Sept. 11, 2001, we have been in a period of hostilities).
- The INA requires [all citizenship applicants](#) to have good moral character, have knowledge of the English language, U.S. government, and U.S. history, and take an Oath of Allegiance to the U.S. Constitution.
- In addition, applicants must meet the following [requirements](#):

| “Peacetime” Requirements  | “Periods of Hostilities” Requirements   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have serve at least one year of honorable service, in active duty or reserve service.</li> <li>▪ Be a lawful permanent resident (LPR) at time of examination for citizenship.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have served honorably in active-duty status or as a member of the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve during a designated period of hostilities or have been separated honorably.</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have continuously resided in the United States for at least five years and have been physically present in the U.S. for at least 30 months out of the 5 years immediately before the application filing date; or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Filed an application while still in service or within 6 months of separation, which waives the physical presence requirements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have been admitted as a LPR any time after enlistment or induction; or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have been physically present in the U.S. or certain territories at enlistment or induction regardless of whether the applicant was a LPR.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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- Under the [Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative](#), the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps allow non-citizen enlistees the chance to naturalize when they graduate from basic training.

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